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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the source of teacher frustration concerning their students' spelling abilities and whether or not word study increases retention as opposed to a traditional approach to spelling instruction. Subjects, 16 fifth-grade students at a public school in a suburban area of central Virginia, were formed into groups based on performance on a qualitative inventory of word knowledge. Subjects were exposed to a word study approach to spelling instruction for two weeks. Posttests were administered at the end of each week of instruction, and retention tests were administered two weeks after completion of instruction. Results indicated that: (1) no significant difference between posttest scores of the group and the year-to-date average; (2) none of the instructional groups showed statistically significant increases on the posttests; and (3) one group scored significantly higher on the retention test after the word study instruction, another group's scores neared statistical significance, and the third group scored better after traditional instruction than after word study instruction. A survey (completed by 16 of the 32 teachers at the school) of the teaching staff investigated whether a correlation existed between the teachers' comfort level with word study instruction and their implementation of a word study program. Results indicated a positive correlation which did not reach statistical significance; a high percentage of teachers who did not implement basic aspects of a word study approach; and a low comfort level. (Contains 20 references and eight unnumbered figures of data.) (RS)

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IS WORD STUDY THE BEST APPROACH TO SPELLING INSTRUCTION?

A Study in the Effectiveness of Word Study

vs. A Traditional Approach to Spelling Instruction

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The use of word study programs has become a much debated issue in educational circles of late. What is word study? Why should we use word study instead of traditional approaches that seem to have been working fine? I have heard these questions and others raised during my teaching-associate, or student teaching, experience in a central Virginia school system. Several teachers have expressed to me that they are concerned about the spelling abilities of their students. There is more than one possible reason that students are not performing up to their teachers' expectations. It is possible that current research is flawed, and that word study is not the best approach to spelling instruction. It is also quite possible that teachers are not aware of current research, for whatever reason, or are not properly trained for the successful application of the research.

The purpose of this study is to attempt to identify the source of teachers frustration, and to determine whether or not word study increases retention as opposed to a traditional approach to spelling instruction. The study will involve a survey of teachers as well as a classroom study that is designed to measure the retention capabilities of each approach.

There are several things that I expect to find in this study. One is that I expect that there is a lengthy lag time between the completion of research and the implementation of that research in the classroom. I also expect to show that training on the successful implementation of a word study program is poor, both at universities and on the job. Finally I expect to find that word study is indeed the best approach to spelling instruction. It is my hope that this research, and other similar studies, will aid in alleviating some of the pressures caused by misperceptions that today's

students are not as capable as their predecessors or that teachers are falling down on the job.

In the following pages I will do several things. I will review the history of spelling instruction as well as current research and literature on the subject. I will also detail the characteristics of my study and the characteristics of the individuals involved. Once each step is laid out, I will formulate an analysis of the results and summarize my findings.

Rote Memorization

Spelling instruction over the years has, surprisingly enough, undergone very few significant changes, most of them coming in the last half-century. The rote memorization of words was used as the standard instructional strategy in America as early as the mid to late eighteenth century and continued to be the strategy of choice well into the twentieth century. Noah Webster was one of the first advocates of this approach. In the writing of his Blue-Backed Speller in 1783, Webster followed the reasoning that there was no logical pattern in English spelling. With this reasoning in mind, Webster proceeded to make some words "uniquely American" by changing the spelling of them when producing his famous dictionary (Templeton, 1992). Webster also called spelling "the foundation of reading" . Today, of course, we tend to believe the opposite.

It was not until 1919, when Ernest Horn began conducting studies on frequency lists and routines, that the rote memorization approach was supported by a scientific study. Horn argued that English spelling was under-principled, and that words were learned as arbitrary sequences of letters that have no logic behind them (Nelson, 1989). This memorization theory of spelling instruction remained the approach of choice until the middle of the twentieth century.

An Emerging Pattern

The most meaningful breakthrough in instructional approaches to spelling development in over 150 years came with the Stanford Studies in the 1950s. The Stanford Studies established that there was a greater letter/sound regularity than was previously believed, and consequently, more pattern than madness in our spelling system (Templeton, 1992; Hanna, Hanna, Hodges, & Rudorf, 1966). The Stanford Study involved the programming of computers with spelling rules and proceeded to "test" the computer's knowledge of over 17,000 words. The computer did surprisingly well, even though it was not programmed for semantics or morphemes.

On the heels of the Stanford Study came more support for the existence of patterns in American spelling with the research of Charles Read and Carol Chomsky. Read and Chomsky discovered, or rediscovered, that words similar in meaning are often similar in spelling as well, regardless if the sounds are similar or not (Chomsky, 1970). What Read and Chomsky did, in fact, was to bring to light the ideas of Henry Bradley, a man whose research was ignored in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Some examples of these words are critic and criticize, or solemn and solemnity (Templeton, 1992).

Developmental Theory

The work of Read and Chomsky sparked a series of studies that focused on developmental aspects of spelling. These studies carried on through the 1980s. A major proponent of what was called a developmental spelling theory was Edmund Henderson. Henderson took to heart the then recent research of his colleagues concerning the impact of frequency and orthographic patterning in American spelling, and endeavored to determine

how children find these regularities and in what order they learn them (Nelson, 1989).

Henderson's research revealed five distinct stages of spelling development (Henderson & Beers, 1977). The first stage is called the Preliterate Phonetic stage. Spellers in this stage usually know the alphabet but not the conventional letter sounds. They think in terms of how the letter itself is pronounced. Initial sounds are often represented correctly, but little more. These spellers do not have a stable concept of word. The following are some examples of Stage I spellings.

WORD	**SPELLING**
bump	b **or** bp (often reversed)
drip	j
chin	h **or** n

Stage II is called the phonetic or letter-name stage. These spellers have a stable concept of word and a short list of sight words that are usually spelled correctly. The typical strategy of these spellers is to match the sounds of a word with the letter name that has the same or closest sound. Long vowels are usually represented correctly, but short vowel sounds are most commonly represented by the long vowel sound that most closely resembles it. Letter-name spellers will also make mistakes when spelling unstressed syllables and nasal sounds that are followed by hard consonants. Some spellings in Stage II might be as follows.

WORD	**SPELLING**
bump	bop **or** bomp
chin	hen **or** chen
drum	jom **or** drom

Stage III is generally known as the Within-Word Pattern Stage. Spellers at this stage will likely have control of consonantal blends and short vowels, but will have problems with long vowel patterns. Morphological endings such as ed and ing become controlled at this stage. Following are some examples of Stage III spellings.

WORD	**SPELLING**
brave	braiv
smoke	smock **or** smocke
pinned	pind **or** pined

Stage IV, the Syllable Juncture Stage, is the next step in the child's development of spelling. At this stage spellers have problems with the conventions of joining syllables such as doubling and e-drops. Unaccented syllables can also cause problems as well as uncommon vowel patterns. Some mistakes that syllable-juncture spellers make may include the following.

WORD	**SPELLING**
helmet	helmit **or** helment
skipping	skiping
early	erly **or** eirly

The fifth and final stage has been dubbed the Derivational Constancies Stage. Stage V spellers usé meaning relationships to stabilize their spelling regardless of sound change. This group will most likely benefit from the study of related words derived from the same base or root. Here are some examples of Stage V spellings.

WORD	SPELLING
enclosed	inclosed
accomplish	acomplish
composition	compasition

The research of Henderson and Bears was further supported by a study conducted by Robert Schlagal. Schlagal's study suggested that children are introduced to words by frequency of occurrence which carries them from simple words at first toward the more complex (Schlagal, 1986; Schlagal, 1982). Schlagal concluded that the process of learning to spell "is progressive and developmental, and the focus of difficulty shifts as principles and patterns are mastered and new ones appear." (1982) This study has been replicated many times since 1982.

The developmental theory was complemented by the derivation of the "connectionist theory". This theory, based on computer modeling, shows a progression in spelling development from single letters, to letter patterns, to syllables, and finally morphemic units (Templeton, 1992; Seidenberg and McClellan, 1989).

Reading and Spelling Connections

It probably seems obvious to us all that there must be a close relation between reading and spelling, but there are significant differences in the two that cannot be ignored. Spelling requires a more careful and methodical approach than does reading. The reader is able to identify words with little effort, and can at times skip words completely without losing the meaning of the passage. It is also true that when readers attack an unfamiliar word the spelling of the word is only one of the clues that are used. Contextual clues are also a part of the readers strategy. With these differences in mind, there have been a number of studies done in the past decade to find out if

indeed there is a direct correlation between spelling and reading ability. Studies done by Morris and Perney (1984), as well as Bear (1982), have shown high positive correlations (r=.82 and r=.80 respectively) between reading rate and spelling accuracy in first graders. These studies were followed up, using third and fifth grade students, by Zutwell and Rasinski (1989). Zutwell and Rasinski also found high positive correlations. What these studies tell us is that there is a strong relationship between spelling skill and reading ability and they support the concept that a common body of conceptual work knowledge underlies both disciplines.

The research discussed thus far clearly points us in the direction of word study as the most effective means of spelling instruction. Still there is some confusion as to what an effective means of word study instruction might be, and it is true that there is no real definition of word study. In my examination of recent research and techniques I have found what I consider to be nine key components of a word study program. These key components are taken from an array of different sources. They are, in fact, suggestions that are advocated by each one of several leading researchers on the subject. As I list each strategy, or component, I will discuss its characteristics and importance to word study.

Student Corrected Pretests

The pretest is a tool that has been in the instructional archives for many years. The use of pretests allows the student to concentrate on the words that need attention while releasing them from the task of studying words they already know. Students that correct their own tests are able to see which words are difficult for them, and can benefit from correcting these errors themselves (Storie and Willems, 1988; Graham, 1983). A student corrected pretest can alone "contribute 90-95 percent of the

achievement resulting from the combined effect of the pronunciation exercise, corrected test, and study" (Fitzsimmons and Loomer, 1978).

Post-tests

Post-tests are, not surprisingly, the most universally accepted component of any spelling or word study program. Certainly they are the most effective means of measuring a student's knowledge of a given word list and, when used in conjunction with the pretest, that student's progress from day to day and week to week.

Achievement Groups

Grouping students according to their individual achievement levels is, in my estimation, one of the two key components that are an absolute must for the successful implementation of word study instruction. Research has shown that the average class can be divided into three distinct instructional levels (Schlagal, 1982). Schlagal has, in fact, developed a qualitative spelling inventory that has been used over and over again by leading researchers in the field (Bloodgood, 1991; Storie and Willems, 1988; Nelson, 1989; Schlagal and Schlagal, 1992). This qualitative inventory can successfully place students into groups that correspond closely with Henderson's developmental stages of spelling. The advantage of instructional levels is clear. Studies have indicated that students working above or below their capabilities may become bored or anxious and could develop a negative attitude toward spelling (Schlagal, 1986; Stauffer, Abrams, and Pikulski, 1978). These students may also develop poor study habits as well as inhibitions about spelling and writing (Schlagal, 1982; Schlagal and Schlagal, 1992).

Word Sort Exercises

The second of the two essential components is word sorting exercises. Word sorting engages the speller in directly examining a group of spelling words for their fit in general spelling patterns (Nelson, 1989; Henderson, 1981). Word sorts require students to place cards with the spelling words written on them into a specific column that is headed with an "example" of that same pattern and sound. The purpose of these sorts is to promote fluency and understanding in identifying patterns and contrasting features within the target words (Schlagal and Schlagal, 1992). When sorting these words it is important that the students read them aloud. Otherwise they may make a mistake in the placement of words that have similar spellings but different sounds (Nelson, 1989). A good example of such an error would be placing the word "grown" in the same category as "down" and howl". An example of a partially finished word sort may appear as follows.

sad	**shade**	**say**
mad	made	play
glad	grade	day

Unsorted words = hay, bad, blade

Games

Another key component of word study is the use of games for the purposes of spelling instruction. Aside from the obvious advantage of student interest level, games can reinforce the concepts being taught and expand students' sight vocabulary (Bloodgood, 1991). Research has shown that games and activities can strengthen the long-term retention of spelling words (Fitzsimmons and Loomer, 1978), and suggests that they enhance student interest and the spelling program. Computer games may be

used along with some more traditional games such as "Hangman" or an adapted version of "Rummy" or "Old Maid" (Storie and Willems, 1988; Bloodgood, 1991).

Individualized Instruction

It is important that each child gets the individual attention that he/she needs and deserves. One way to accomplish this task is to teach students to proofread and edit their writing assignments for spelling errors. After all, "spelling study and vocabulary growth are part of the same fabric of written language" (Hodges, 1991). Separating students into achievement groups will also go a long way in individualizing the program for the student.

Morphemes and Root Words

The use of morphemes and root words has been a part of spelling instruction for some time and are still considered important. The findings of Read (1971) and Chomsky (1970) are advocated regularly by leading researchers (Templeton, 1992; Nelson, 1989; Schlagal and Schlagal, 1992), being called the "'Rosetta Stone' for unlocking the logic underlying children's invented spelling (Templeton, 1992)." Understanding how words, roots, and affixes are combined to form new words will help improve students' spellings. Notice how nature can change to natural, unnatural, naturally, naturalist, and naturalism with the dropping of the "e" being the only change in the spelling (Hodges, 1991). Research points to the use of morphemes and root words at the upper levels of spelling development, probably the late fourth or fifth stage of Henderson's developmental levels (Schlagal, 1982; Schlagal 1986; Templeton, 1992; Read, 1971, Chomsky, 1970).

Integrated Spelling and Language Arts

Taking into consideration the research of Bear (1982), Morris and Perney (1984), and Zutwell and Rasinski (1989), proving the high correlation between reading and spelling abilities, certainly the integration of these two disciplines is essential. Studies have also been done which show that spelling errors occur with words that students speak and hear, but rarely see in print (Gentry, 1990) This suggests that careful supervision over the students' choices of reading material is a must. If students are reading books at their appropriate reading level, it should in most cases, correspond to their spelling level. Students' attention can be directed to the patterns that exist in their weekly spelling list and record the words from their daily reading assignment that follow the same pattern.

Another aspect of the Language Arts curriculum that should be integrated with spelling is writing. Students should be instructed to proof read their writing exercises for spelling (Gentry, 1990). This will help students recognize where their problems lie. Words from the weekly list should also be used in writing, such as stories, sentences, or simulation exercises (Bloodgood, 1991).

Designated Time for Instruction

While it is important to integrate spelling with the Language Arts curriculum, it is also important that we do not exclude spelling as a discipline. Research clearly rejects the notion that spelling is learned incidentally (Gentry, 1990), and those classrooms immersed in whole language approach can sometimes lose sight of this fact. At the same time a teacher need not "over-teach" the subject. Research has shown that 60-75 minutes of instruction per week is sufficient (Storie and Willems, 1988).

The Study

Since I have determined that the class in which my study was conducted had been taught by "traditional" means, it is important that I define what I consider "traditional" to be. When I use the term traditional, I do not mean that the class is mired in a system that relies strictly upon rote memorization. This particular program used organized lists that were phonetically constructed, as well as some writing exercises that make use of the weekly word list. What this classroom did not employ was a developmental approach to instruction, an approach that would have made use of other key components that I have listed. In an historical perspective, I suppose you could say that the research through Chomsky was evident, but there was no sign of Henderson's work.

The sample group consisted of sixteen fifth grade students at a public school in a suburban area of central Virginia. The group was made up of students who were 88% Anglo-American and 12% African-American, and came from predominantly middle to upper-middle class households. These students were 56% female and 44% male.

The first step of the study was to separate the class into instructional groups. I used Schlagal's (1982) qualitative inventory of word knowledge to accomplish this task. As was suggested by Schlagal, these groups were formed on the basis of student performance on the qualitative inventory, using 50% as the cut-off point. For example, if a student scored 70% on Stage III words, 50% on Stage IV words, and 40% on Stage V words, that student would be placed at the Stage IV level. As a general rule, the difference between a given student's performance at each level will be more marked than the examples that I have given. Out of a total of sixteen

students, seven were placed at Stage V, four at Stage IV, and five at Stage III. At this point I was able to begin the implementation of my program.

Method

The intention of this study was to implement what I consider to be a "model" program of word study in the aforementioned classroom, and to determine whether or not performance and retention are improved as a result of the change in instructional approaches. The study was designed to cover a four-week period. The first and second weeks would consist of the implementation of the word study program. The third week, and most of the fourth, was simply a lag period between instruction and administration of the retention test. I thought that it was important that some time be put between the two to offset, somewhat, the time difference between the instruction of the last "traditional" list and the instruction of the "word study" list.

I began by selecting word lists for each group. The words chosen for the lists adhere to the standards set forth by Henderson, which were discussed earlier in this paper. The list for the Stage III spellers concentrated on long vowel patterns and included words such as "brave", "wait", "sprain", and "eight". The Stage IV spellers need work on joining syllables and spelling uncommon vowel patterns. Some of the words used for the Stage IV list are "select", "subject", "effect", and "collect". The Stage V spellers concentrated on morphemes and semantics, and their list included "thermal", "thermometer", and "thermostat", among others.

The two weeks of instruction were identical in design, the only difference being a new list for the second week. The instructional week began with a pretest that included twenty words for each group. The entire class took their pretests at the same time. The words were called out in

alternating order between the three lists. Once the test was completed, students graded their own work. The spellings were given to the class in the same alternating fashion as the test. The students were required to write the correct spelling of any misspelled words on their test paper.

On the second day of instruction, students began work on several exercises, the first of which was a word sort. Students were required to place their spelling words in categories that corresponded with a model word. Using the Stage III group as an example, "bait" might be the model word for "wait" and "sprain". In addition to the word sort exercise, students were required to use their list words to fill in blank spaces in sentences. An example sentence from this exercise is, "Benedict Arnold was charged with treason during the Revolutionary War." About twenty minutes of class time was spent on these activities, during which time the teacher was available to help students while overseeing the progress of the class. Most students finished in the allotted time, but those that didn't were allowed to finish it at home. On the same evening, students were to begin work on their writing assignment for the week. Their writing assignment, which was to include all of their list words, was written over the course of two days, and was to be edited by the student. The scenario for the assignment was given by the teacher. The first week's assignment was to write a news report, and the second week they were to write an advertisement for their favorite park. The writing assignments were kept lighthearted, and if the student had an acceptable scenario that interested him/her, they were allowed to pursue it.

The next class session was game day. The games used were "charades" and "fill in the blank". "Charades" was played by the same rules as the popular party game for the most part. The students acted out words

from their lists as their other group members guessed the word. When a student guessed correctly, that student was to write the correctly spelled word to receive one point. "Fill in the blank" also required the student to write the correctly spelled word upon answering. The teacher read a sentence, replacing a word with a blank, and the students guessed which word filled the blank. The students collected points as they correctly answered and correctly spelled the word.

The instructional week came to a close on Friday with the post-test, which was administered in the same fashion as the pretest. One at a time, the words were read aloud, alternating between stages, and followed by sentences containing that word. The word was repeated once more before moving on to the next word.

All of these activities were conducted during a specified time each day, between 10:30 a.m. and 10:55 a.m. The total time spent for instruction each week was approximately 80 minutes.

After a two-week hiatus in instruction, the students were tested on their retention of words from both their most recent "traditional" list, and their "word study" lists. The words from the traditional list were given first, and the entire class used the same set of words. They were followed by the "word study" list, which was, once again, administered in an alternating format. In both cases the words were read aloud, a sentence read, and the word repeated.

The Results

The scores of students' post-tests were gathered and compared to "traditional" averages. The average score of the class as a whole was compared to the year-to-date class average, and the average of each instructional group was compared to their respective year-to-date averages.

A two-tailed t-test was applied in each case to check for significant change, using an alpha level of .05. The retention test was split into two parts, "traditional" and "word study", and the two-tailed t-test was used to check for a significant difference in students' performance in each area.

When comparing the average post-test scores of the group to the year-to-date class average, there was no significant difference. The year-to-date average was 91.19, and the post-test average was 90.95. After making this initial comparison, I began to compare the post-test performance of each instructional group with their respective year-to-date averages. The Stage III spellers, although they scored slightly better on their word study post-tests than their year-to-date averages, did not show a significant difference in their scores. The t value for this group worked out to 2, where 2.776 marked a significant change. The same was true for the Stave IV spellers. Students in this group showed improvement, but not significant improvement. The t value for this group worked out to a 1.969. While the t-test showed no significant change in the Stage V group either, there was a noticeable difference in this group. This was the only group that showed a negative t value. That is to say that they were the only group that did better on the "traditional" tests than they did on the "word study" tests. The t value for this group was -1.555 where -2.447 would have showed a significant negative difference.

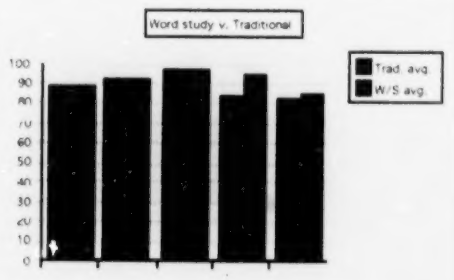
This trend continued with the retention test, the only difference being the significance of the changes. Once again, Stage III spellers showed much higher scores on the "word study" words than on the "traditional" words. This time, however, the difference was significant. The t value worked out to be 4.989 where 2.776 was significant. The Stage IV spellers scored much better on the "word study" list as well. The t-test

showed no significant difference, but it was very, very close. The t value worked out to 3.114 where 3.182 was significant. Had this test been conducted using an alpha level of .06 instead of .05, the difference would have been significant. As was true for Stave V spellers in the performance evaluation, they were the only group to do better on the "traditional" words than the "word study" words, but this time the difference was significant. The t value for this group was -2.678 where -2.447 showed a significant negative difference. (Please see graphs of results on pages 19 and 20.)

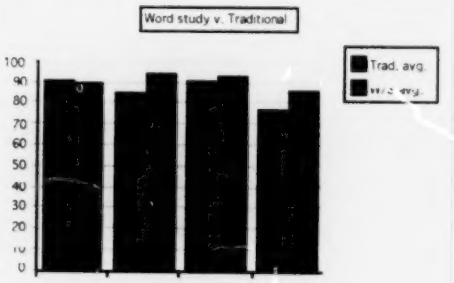
My initial reaction to these results was one of surprise. It was almost a complete inversion of the year-to-date class rank. I suppose that there are a number of things that may have caused this outcome. It is possible that the students in the Stage V group were not yet ready for instruction at that level, but judging from their scores on the inventory of word knowledge, and taking into consideration the success that Schlagal has had with this inventory, I don't believe that to be the case. I believe it to be more likely that the Stage V group was not used to being challenged in spelling. They had previously been quite successful without having to put forth much effort. The improvement of the Stage III and Stage IV spellers, I believe, can be attributed to their placement at an appropriate level of instruction. They had been working with words that they were not developmentally ready to work with.

The Survey

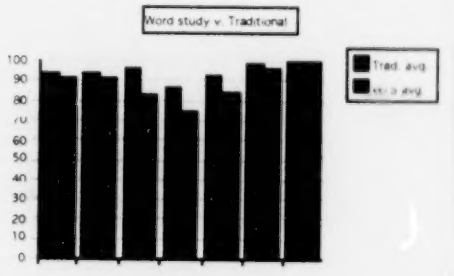
A survey was conducted of the teaching staff of this same school in an attempt to find out if there was a correlation between the teachers' comfort level with word study instruction and their implementation of a word study program in their classroom. The survey was distributed to the



Graphs of performance and retention results of stage III spellers.



Graphs of performance and retention results of stage IV spellers.



Graphs of performance and retention results of stage V spellers.

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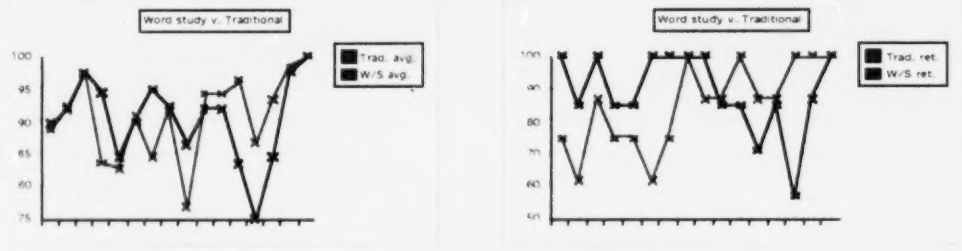

Graph of performance and retention results of entire class.
Lines crossing indicates beginning of stage V spellers

entire teaching staff of 32 teachers, of which I received exactly a 50% return. The survey consisted of fifteen statements which the teacher would rate on a scale of one to five, their level of agreement with the statement, with one being disagreement and five being a strong agreement. The first ten questions inquired about the implementation of specific word study methods while the next five addressed the teachers' comfort level with word study practices. I applied Pearson's r correlation test to the results and found that there was a positive correlation of .001647, but it is not considered to be significant.

Even though the correlation was proven to be insignificant, there are some things that we can learn from the survey. The survey showed that 71.44% of those responding never use student-corrected pretests and only 14.28% use them on a regular basis. The survey also showed that only 57% of those surveyed used achievement groups and 43% do not. Obviously there is a problem with the implementation of word study at this school if this high a percentage of teachers are not using what I would consider to be, and what research suggests to be, very basic elements of a word study approach. The average point total on the implementation portion of the survey was 36.86 out of a possible 50 points, or 73.7%. I

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would not consider 73.7% to be a passing grade on the implementation of word study.

I also think that the score on the comfort level portion was too low. The average score was 16.35 out of a possible 25, or 65.4%. This is very low and is certainly worthy of attention. This part of the survey also indicated a concern about proper training. Of those surveyed, 28.6% replied that they have not had proper training in the successful implementation of a word study program. The survey may not have shown a high positive correlation between implementation and comfort level, but it did show, in my opinion, a deficiency in both areas.

Conclusion

Overall, I think that this study was inconclusive as far as actually proving that a word study approach is the best form of spelling instruction. A study of this sort would be more conclusive if it were to be conducted over an entire school year. This would enable the program to be integrated more successfully with the Language Arts program, as well as provide a more broad perspective of student progress. I believe that this study does point in the direction of a word study approach, and it is possible that a more lengthy study would prove that. In review of the survey, I think that we can find a source of teacher frustration in the low scores that were received. Gwen Storie wrote, "The real demon in spelling seems to be the slow application of research findings to classroom procedures." (Storie and Willems, 1988), and the survey scores seem to support that. In my opinion, there are several things that can be done to decrease the lag time between research and implementation. First, teacher-education programs must include adequate instruction in the most current word study research, and present the material with the emphasis it deserves. Whole language

approach has become the main focus of instruction in teacher-education programs, for good reason, but word study should not be overlooked. It would also be helpful to teachers if the school in which they are teaching were to have regular updates on research, and workshops on the successful implementation of that research. The teacher cannot be expected to stay abreast of all current research, they need help and support from their school. It would also be helpful if the school supplied instructional materials that are easily accessible to teachers. Attention to these areas may lead to a more successful implementation of word study, with more successful results.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to attempt to identify the source of teachers frustration, and to determine whether or not word study increases retention as opposed to a traditional approach to spelling instruction. The study will involve a survey of teachers as well as a classroom study that is designed to measure the retention capabilities of each approach.

There are several things that I expect to find in this study. One is that I expect that there is a lengthy lag time between the completion of research and the implementation of that research in the classroom. I also expect to show that training on the successful implementation of a word study program is poor, both at universities and on the job. Finally I expect to find that word study is indeed the best approach to spelling instruction. It is my hope that this research, and other similar studies, will aid in alleviating some of the pressures caused by misperceptions that today's students are not as capable as their predecessors or that teachers are falling down on the job.

In the following pages I will do several things. I will review the history of spelling instruction as well as current research and literature on the subject. I will also detail the characteristics of my study and the characteristics of the individuals involved. Once each step is laid out, I will formulate an analysis of the results and summarize my findings.

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